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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Family Farm Policy Review

The Family Farm's Future

You Can Help Determine It

"Because so much of the world is rural, every opportunity for farm people to better themselves and the conditions surrounding rural life can do for world peace something that great armies cannot possibly accomplish.

"If democracy is to be a continuing source of hope to rural people elsewhere in the world, democracy must continue to advance in rural America.

"Despite the remarkable progress of our agriculture these past 20 years, we all know that there are still many problems to be solved. That's why we have started an analysis of all our programs and agencies to see how we can improve our services to the Nation's family farms.

"I believe that all farm organizations and all public institutions concerned with agriculture can and will unite in a definite, vigorous program to strengthen family farming in America."

—Secretary of Agriculture CHARLES F. BRANNAN.

The Department of Agriculture thinks the family farm is so vital to the economy, prosperity, and military defense of the Nation that it is reviewing all of its programs and activities to make sure that they are serving the family farm well—and to find out how they can serve it better.

We need the help of everyone interested in agriculture. You can start helping by reading this.

What Has Been Done to Date

A Family Farm Committee, composed of Department officials and representatives of farm and church organizations and the land-grant colleges, has conducted a review of the policies and programs of each agency in the Department with respect to their service to the family farms and farm families of the United States.

This committee looked for ways in which the various agencies are doing a good job in serving the family farm and where the agencies are falling short. It arrived at some tentative recommendations about ways in which improvements might be made within existing authority. The committee also pointed out that some improvements in the Department's services to family farmers would require amendments to existing legislation.

But all of this preliminary work is only a start in the right direction. What the Department wants and needs are the recommendations of farmers themselves and others interested in agriculture for improvement of our farm programs. Before considering this important question, however, let's review briefly as background the role the "family farm" occupies in American agriculture.

What Is Family Farming?

In a country as diversified as the United States, farms and ranches vary widely from place to place, but the pattern of agricultural production and

living which has been known for many years as "family farming" lends itself to the following brief definition:

A family farm or ranch is one which provides the main source of income for the farm family, on which the farm operator (owner or tenant) or members of his family make most of the managerial decisions, participate regularly in farm work, and normally supply a substantial part of the labor needed to operate the farm.

This covers probably 98 percent of the farming units in the United States, as of the 1945 census, excluding part-time farms, share-crop units, and other operations which may be farms in name only and do not contribute the bulk of their operators' incomes.

Family Farming Is a Way of Living

But a mere definition of family farming or ranching is not enough; family farming is also a way of life—a way of rural living and of national democracy. The roots of family farming in the United States are as old and sturdy as the Nation itself. The pattern of land ownership was built into the fabric of this country along the lines of individual ownership and operation of land, without restrictions on selling or leaving the farm to the next generation of the family.

Ownership is not absolutely required for family farming, but it is definitely a goal. Family farming is not only the traditional democratic pattern of land occupancy, but it is also desirable because production increases as security of tenure increases. Ownership by the family operating the farm has historically brought better stewardship of the soil and water resources through sounder attention to conservation.

Measured in acres, family farms or ranches differ in size, even within a farming area, influenced by the crops and livestock produced and the productivity of the land. In fact, one characteristic of family farming is its adaptability to changing patterns of production. Another is that the home activities of the family are combined with operation of the farm. The family farm builds strong communities—communities where tolerance, co-operation, self-reliance, and a love of freedom thrive.

Much of the national emphasis on family farming has been directed toward increasing the opportunities for farm families to operate successful family farms. Thus, family farming should be regarded as being flexible from the standpoint of size to allow for growth to attain adequate size and operational efficiency. Similarly, the concept of family farming has no arbitrary upward limit on size, so long as the other qualifications are met. Rather, successful operators of *family farms* should be encouraged to expand and increase their production within the pattern of family farming around them.

To justify continued national support and encouragement, family farming must maintain a standard of adequacy and efficiency—in terms of family living and a contribution to the national well-being. This standard may be placed quite high and might even be thought of as a goal, so long as the door of opportunity for advancement is open to farm laborers and operators of small farms.

Operating efficiency is essential to desirable family farming. This means that a family farm must have access to enough resources at least to make full use of family labor and management although in terms of acres, of course, this will vary extremely. An acreage large enough for a family farm with tobacco as the principal source of in-

come would be too small for a wheat farm or a cattle ranch. A family farm or ranch should be of sufficient size and productivity to pay expenses, including maintenance of the farm, and to furnish an income that will provide a comfortable living for a family.

A good standard of family living on such a farm includes family food, clothing, shelter, medical care, recreation and education on a parity with that of urban residents of the same general skill and managerial ability. It should also permit savings to meet the needs of a retirement age comparable to that of urban residents.

Purpose of This Review

Because the family farm is the center of the goal for improved agriculture in peace or in war, we are reviewing the farm programs to be sure that they are effectively serving the family farm. This is just one phase of the constant appraisal and reappraisal of our programs, policies, and operations which are essential to the Department's rendering maximum service to farmers and the Nation. In this period of mobilization, the well-operated family farm is the target at which we must aim in making the wisest, most efficient use of such critical items as farm machinery, pesticides, and fertilizer. In the hands of such farmers, the tools of production will be used effectively and conserved carefully, for the well-operated family farm can be depended upon in good weather or bad, famine or plenty, and war or peace.

The American family farm pattern is one of the Nation's main exhibits in the world struggle for men's minds and one of the examples we hold out for all the world to see. We seek to extend the benefits and advantages of our system to rural populations elsewhere. To be successful in this, we should make sure that our own pattern is the best possible one. Hence, we must hold the mir-

ror up to ourselves, while we urge people of other countries to view the American family farm picture.

The Next Step

Copies of the Department's preliminary report on the Family Farm Policy Review have been sent to your State and County Agricultural Mobilization Committees. It will be their job to get a thorough study and discussion of the Department programs among farmers and other local people. These committees will be busy on many other farm mobilization jobs this summer. So if your County Agricultural Mobilization Committee does not contact you to obtain your recommendations, please get your views to this committee.

We're asking that everyone who is seriously interested in agriculture take a new look at all the farm programs and activities, using the family farm concept as a measuring stick. Perhaps you won't agree in all, or even in most, essentials with the thinking of the Department's committees. That's democracy. The important thing is for you to think about this matter and express your thoughts.

By the end of summer it is hoped that the counties will have passed their findings on to the State Agricultural Mobilization Committees and that the State committees will in turn have forwarded them to the Department.

Please do *your* part in thinking about the needs and problems of family farms in your neighborhood. How do *you* think our farm policies and programs should be improved to help family farms and farm families make their full contribution to the strength and security of a free America?